

Ridley Park, PA – Labeling the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) plan to increase the size of Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) and wipe out scores of businesses and homes as another example of the agency’s rogue activities, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) invited Ridley Park Council members and individuals attending tonight’s Borough Council Meeting to Wednesday’s FAA Public Hearing about the proposed Capacity Enhancement Program (CEP) for the airport. The Congressman explained the CEP’s relationship to the air space redesign – a project for which the Government Accounting Office (GAO) confirmed a cost-benefit analysis was not done – and emphasized that the FAA had removed the term capacity enhancement from its objectives for the redesign that has directed many planes’ takeoff routes over land instead of the Delaware River. This deletion decreased the still substantial and harmful environmental impact of that endeavor. Congressman Sestak warned not only of the effect of increased noise, but also that the CEP would devastate much of Tinicum. —

“If this community continues to band together to resist the FAA’s destructive policies, I am cautiously optimistic that we can defeat the agency’s efforts to increase air traffic over many of my constituent’s homes, workplaces and schools to dangerous levels,” said Congressman Sestak. “The purpose of my speaking at tonight’s meeting was to provide an update on the FAA’s efforts, as well as the steps being taken to halt those efforts, and to express the urgency with which we must approach our opposition to the CEP, which would threaten many homes and businesses in Tinicum, would require the USPS plant to move, and would add to the harm caused to my constituents by the air space redesign. I look forward to presenting the case against the CEP at the hearing on the program’s environmental impact statement.”

According to the FAA, the CEP would reconfigure the airfield to provide four east-west parallel runways by extending existing Runway 8-26 and adding a new runway near the Delaware River; reconfiguring and expanding the terminal complex; reconfiguring the cargo areas and parking areas; relocating the Air Traffic Control Tower; and relocating navigational aids and lights.

The GAO’s review of the air space redesign described the irresponsible approach the FAA has taken in its ineffective attempt to significantly reduce flight delays. According to the GAO, the agency began to implement the redesign without first establishing its costs, and explained that the benefit of the project would be a savings – in 2011 – of only 18 seconds in delay for takeoffs and 45 seconds for landings.

“Due to increased aircraft noise, children would lose one year of educational growth and be at heightened risk of cardiovascular disease – all for 18 to 45 seconds of benefit,” said Congressman Sestak.

In addition to speaking out and supporting litigation if necessary against the CEP, the Congressman outlined other parts of the comprehensive effort to stop the FAA's flawed initiatives. He has supported a legal challenge mounted by local governments against the air space redesign, has uncovered and is working on action related to PHL's Noise Compatibility Program, which requires new noise mitigation procedures when flight patterns change, and is working in Washington to show Congress that it should not appropriate money for a project for which the FAA has not determined the cost.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*

###